



# STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW

## ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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## COMPTROLLER MYCHAJLIW UPDATES CHEEKTOWAGA TAXPAYER GROUP ON SCHOOL CONSOLIDATIONS

*Comptroller Mychajliw provides clear and honest understanding of school consolidation process to taxpayers at community group meeting, stresses the importance of keeping sales tax revenue in the classroom*

**(CHEEKTOWAGA, NY)** - Erie County Comptroller Stefan I. Mychajliw Jr. hosted a presentation at the May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 Cheektowaga Town Park Community Association meeting to provide taxpayers with a clear picture of how the county shares sales tax with schools and towns and the true cost breakdown of school consolidations.

“Politicians are trying to fool taxpayers by not telling the truth about increased costs associated with forcing districts to consolidate. Taxpayers are being sold a bill of goods. No different than when families were lied to when told they could keep their doctor and keep their health care plan under Obamacare. Politicians should stop threatening to ‘hammer’ children and families if they do not consolidate. If taxpayers and school boards unanimously vote on their own to consolidate, that’s wonderful. I support that,” said Comptroller Mychajliw.

Comptroller Mychajliw updated the Community Association members on the total sales tax revenue the Cheektowaga and Depew schools received in 2017, which totaled \$9,909,520. Here is a breakdown of sales tax revenue, many of which comes from Canadian shoppers spending money on our side of the border, for school districts within the Town of Cheektowaga:

- Cheektowaga-Maryvale: \$2,398,339
- Cheektowaga Central: \$2,377,197
- Depew: \$2,099,840
- Cheektowaga-Sloan: \$1,563,050
- Cleveland-Hill: \$1,471,094

That funding is critical for programming in and around the classroom, services and for students and teachers. As part of a 1977 Sales Tax Sharing Agreement between Erie County and the cities of Buffalo, Lackawanna and Tonawanda, those entities agreed to share a portion of sales tax revenue with school districts across Erie County.

Cities, towns and villages also receive a portion of sales tax revenue as part of that 1977 agreement. Comptroller Mychajliw told taxpayers that towns and villages served by the Cheektowaga and Depew school districts received millions of dollars in sales tax revenue 2017:

- Cheektowaga: \$9,430,977
- Depew: \$1,717,347
- Sloan: \$246,707

“The politicians can cancel this sales tax contract by only giving 12-months’ notice. Schools and local governments would be crippled without this revenue. While other politicians threatened to use a ‘hammer’ on school districts that don’t consolidate, our partners in education should not be threatened.”

"That is why I am letting taxpayers know exactly how much they receive in funding from sales tax revenue. Politicians should not behave like bullies, threatening to 'hammer' school districts, towns, children, parents and teachers if they do not consolidate. I will be a champion of our towns, taxpayers and teachers. I will fight hard to keep that important revenue where it belongs: in the classroom to benefit students and teachers and in our towns, cities and villages across Erie County," added Comptroller Mychajliw.

In his presentation, Comptroller Mychajliw reported that if districts consolidated, teacher salaries and health care costs would "bump up" to whichever district paid more. The Board of Education was given an example of "bumping up" salaries between the Cheektowaga Central School District and Cheektowaga Sloan School District would cost an additional \$27,000 per teacher, for an educator with 17-years' experience and a Master's Degree. New York State aid meant to offset increased costs would begin being phased out after six years.

"The Cheektowaga community deserves an intellectually honest discussion. Families deserve facts, not scare tactics, about the sales tax sharing agreement, how it benefits them, and the increased costs of forcing school consolidation on taxpayers that may not even want it," said Comptroller Mychajliw, who also shared the burdensome process of consolidating school districts, which involves multiple votes from municipalities, boards of education, and New York State approval.

Comptroller Mychajliw highlighted an extensive school consolidation study from Syracuse University that showed districts with 300 or fewer students can benefit financially from consolidating. Most recent data shows the Cheektowaga and Depew school districts educate 1,200 - 2,200 students.

School districts that are in severe financial distress and using large amounts of fund balance to pay recurring expenses are also shown to benefit in the short term from consolidating with a financially sound district. That is not the case in these districts.

"Taxpayers feel they don't need to be bullied by outsiders on how to run their schools or towns. My multiple reports on sales tax revenue and school district consolidations are available to every taxpayer who wants to understand facts and the truth. From there, taxpayers can decide for themselves what is best for their towns and schools. That is democracy in action."

"If communities and school boards vote to approve school consolidations, I wholeheartedly support that," concluded Comptroller Mychajliw.

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